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ABSTRACT

A survey of 30 randomly selected adult students enrolled in Surry Community College's (SCC's) high school completion program was conducted to determine the societal factors that motivate adults to complete high school diploma requirements. The survey instrument was based upon the findings from a review of the literature, interviews with three instructors in the high school completion program, and interviews with three adult high school completion students. The survey participants were asked to indicate those factors that had influenced their decision to enroll in the SCC program on a 40-item checklist of potential influences. The items on the checklist fell into one or more broad categories, reflecting: (1) the desire to complete high school for personal satisfaction; (2) the desire to improve job skills; (3) the flexibility of the schedule offered at SCC and the convenience of its location; and (4) the fact that the program is offered free of charge. Of the items on the survey instrument, 24 were checked by ten or more students. The most commonly selected reasons were: "I want to be able to say that I have completed high school," "I always wanted to finish high school and now I have an opportunity," and "I want a better education." The survey report reviews related literature and presents conclusions about the applicability of the findings to student recruitment. The questionnaire is appended. (JP)

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SOCIETAL FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE ADULTS TO COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL

by

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Surry Community College

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

An important function of Surry Community College has been to provide an instructional program designed to assist adult students in their efforts to complete high school. This function has been hampered by the difficulty in recruiting non-high school graduate adults into the high school completion program provided through the Continuing Education Division of Surry Community College. This study was designed to determine some of the societal factors which influence an adult to complete high school. These societal factors, once determined, were expected to help the college in the recruitment of non-high school graduate adults.

The procedures for this study included a review of related literature, interviews with three instructors from the high school completion program and interviews with three high school completion students. The review of literature and the interviews were designed to determine some societal factors which influence adults to complete high school. A list of forty (40) factors were found. These forty factors were listed in a check sheet and were tested on three adult high school completion students. A random selection of thirty (30) adult high school completion students was made and the check list was administered to this sample group. Each societal factor which was checked by ten (10) or more of the random sample of thirty (30) adults was

considered to be a significant societal factor which influenced adults to complete high school.

Twenty-four (24) of the forty (40) societal factors listed received ten (10) or more checks. These twenty-four societal factors were considered to be significant societal factors influencing adults to complete high school.

The following recommendations were made:

1. News releases, radio announcements and other recruitment efforts should be written or made after a careful review of this study.

2. The results of this study should be made available to instructors and counselors who are in contact with non-high school graduate adults.

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INTRODUCTION

An important function of Surry Community College has been to provide instruction designed to assist adult students in their efforts to complete high school through the high school completion program. Each year for the past five years approximately one hundred adults have completed high school through this program. This number represents about fifteen percent (15%) of all students (community college and public school graduates) who graduated from high school each year in Surry and Yadkin counties for the past five years.

During the first six months of the 1978-1979 academic year the number of adults who completed high school through the Continuing Education Division of Surry Community College increased by approximately fifty percent (50%) to seventy-six graduates. The Continuing Education Division Dean and coordinator were pleased with the increase from approximately fifty graduates for the first six months in each of the preceding five academic school years to seventy-six graduates in the first six months in the 1978-1979 academic school year. The increase is believed to be due to the importance which has been placed on the recruitment of adult non-high school graduates in the two counties served by the college. The increase in the number of graduates appeared good until

one considered the number of adults, estimated to be over fifteen thousand (15,000) in the service area of the college, who are eighteen years old or older and are neither high school graduates nor enrolled in a high school completion program. Perhaps even more important is the fact that approximately thirty percent (30%) of the number of public school students in Surry and Yadkin counties who entered the ninth grade of high school in previous years have dropped out of school before completing the twelfth grade. At the age of eighteen years the responsibility for providing a high school program for these drop-outs has become that of the Continuing Education Division of the college. Many of these young adults as well as other adults who are non-high school graduates have been difficult to recruit for the high school completion program at Surry Community College. Yet, societal factors considered by adults to be important, such as socio-economic advancement, are often considered to be related to the educational level of individuals.

This investigation of some of the societal factors which have influenced non-high school graduates, eighteen years of age and older, to continue their education through the high school level was expected to help Surry Community College in its effort to recruit students for the high school completion program and to meet the needs of many more of the adults in the college service area. It was the purpose of this

study to investigate some of the societal factors which influence adults to complete high school.

This study to determine the societal factors which influence adults to complete high school at Surry Community College involved the following steps:

1. A survey of literature was made to determine some of the reasons society values education.
2. The three Surry Community College high school completion instructors were interviewed to determine the societal factors these instructors believed to have influenced adults to enroll in the high school completion program.
3. Three adults enrolled in the high school completion program were interviewed to determine some of the societal factors which influenced each of them to enroll in the high school completion program.
4. The ideas gained from the survey of literature, the material compiled from each of the interviews with the three instructors and the material compiled from each of the interviews with the three students were used to develop a check list of societal factors which were believed to influence adults to enroll in the high school completion program at Surry Community College.
5. The check list was tested.
6. The check list was administered to a random sample of thirty adults who were enrolled in the high school completion program at Surry Community College. These adult students were asked individually to check those societal factors included on the check list which influenced him to enroll in the high school completion program at Surry Community College.
7. The results of the check list were totaled.
8. Each of the items on the check list which was checked by at least ten (10) people in the sample group was considered to be a significant factor

influencing adults to register in the high school completion program at Surry Community College.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

One of the basic responsibilities of the Continuing Education Division at Surry Community College has been to provide an instructional program for adults who have not completed high school. A program has been designed to provide instruction on an individual basis, depending on the tested educational needs of the adult learner, through the high school level. The program has been in operation since 1966 and the success of the program has been measured in terms of the number of adults who complete high school each year. Over the past five years the average number of adults who have graduated has increased to approximately one hundred students each year. This number represents about fifteen percent (15%) of all the students (community college and public high school) who have graduated each year in the two counties served by the college. The number who have graduated each year for the past five years has been considered good by the Dean of Continuing Education and the high school completion instructors, however, the Dean of Continuing Education and the high school completion coordinators have also believed that the number of adults who complete high school each year should be increased for three basic reasons:

1. The number of adults eighteen years old and older in the two counties served by the college who are neither high school graduates nor are enrolled in a high school completion program is estimated to be over fifteen thousand (15,000).

2. According to public school records approximately thirty percent (30%) of the public school students in the college service area who enroll in the ninth grade drop out of the public high school before graduating.

3. The North Carolina State Board of Education has emphasized the need to reduce adult illiteracy by providing high school level instruction and materials free of charge to adults through the community college system.

The large number of adults who have not completed high school and the number of students who have dropped out of the public high schools each year in the two counties served by Surry Community College have pointed to the need for the college to increase the number of adult students who graduate through the high school completion program. To meet this need the college has increased its efforts to recruit students by publicizing the high school completion program through the news media. This additional emphasis on recruitment has increased the number of students enrolled in the high school completion program, however, the increase in the number of adults who are enrolled is very small when compared to the number of adults in the college service area who have not completed high school.

One of the major themes of the Societal Factors module has been centered around the effects societal factors have

had on the educational programs in community colleges and the recruitment of various groups of students in these programs.

It was the purpose of this study to determine some of the societal factors which have had a positive influence on adults to complete high school. These positive societal factors, once identified, were expected to provide helpful information which could be used to recruit additional adults into the high school completion program. In addition, it was expected that this information would be helpful to counselors and instructors in their work with adult students.

A review of literature to determine some of the societal factors which influence adults to continue their education was made. These societal factors, according to Hardaway (3:5), included the trend of older adults to return to school. She indicated that there is a national trend toward adults returning to school whose previous educations were interrupted. There is a strong belief by many adults in today's society that a lack of education results in a waste of manpower as well as a waste of human potential and individual dignity. Additional basic education "would enable them to have opportunities for advancement in jobs" according to Speegle (9:12). Speegle further concluded that additional education would also improve the everyday lives of the families of the adult students.

Boone (2:6-11) emphasized that a relevant concern supporting the need for adult education relates to the nature of a democratic society. The assumption undergirding this notion, according to Boone, was that a democratic society makes special demands on the individual. Boone included in these demands the need for: an educated electorate that can intelligently exercise its responsibilities of citizenship in an enlightened and responsible manner, a citizenry that possesses an understanding and appreciation of freedom and adults who can adapt to the rapid changes in society. Boone also pointed to the importance the American society places on the occupation of the individual. Many of the occupations held in high esteem by society are those which require up-to-date knowledge and skills characteristic of the more educated adults. Boone (2:12) emphasized the need for adults to have educational skills which help them to be better consumers and the need for educational programs designed to teach these skills.

Russell (8:41-46) agreed with Boone on the importance of schooling in today's society. He stated that across the United States over twelve million adults have less than five years of formal schooling. These adults, according to Rossman (7:23), are restricted by economic deprivation and under education and are unable to lead full, productive or meaningful lives.

The Standards and Evaluation Criteria published by the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges (6:18) for continuing education adult programs placed emphasis on adult education. It stated:

> Today, as never before, it is apparent that tomorrow belongs to the "learning" and not to the "knowing." This is a result of the social, economic and technological changes in society. These changes have placed certain demands on people to continue their education . . . and to develop new attitudes, values and skills needed to cope with changing society.
>
> The Community College System is charged with the responsibility to provide programs designed to meet the educational needs of all citizens. These programs should help the individuals to be more productive and responsible citizens.

The Second Treasury of Techniques for Teaching Adults (4:6) emphasized the importance of providing a classroom environment which is warm and uncritical of the undereducated adult. The teaching/learning environment must be positive in every respect. Adult students often bring with them a fear of school which can only be eliminated through a warm educational environment which fully recognizes the student as an adult. Ulmer (10:13) agreed that a student in a cheerful, comfortable setting who has respect for and from his instructor and a clear view of how the knowledge he is gaining will help him realize his personal goals, will almost certainly be a more confident student. Ulmer also stated that the adult's motivation is a boon and a challenge to the teacher. He feels that the teacher must discover

the student's motivation and then reinforce this constantly by showing him the connection between what he is learning and what he has set out to accomplish.

Ulmer stated that the reasons adults attend class range from wanting to learn to write a signature on the payroll to a desire to read the Bible. Some want to qualify for a better job and some want to be able to help their children in school. Others, according to Ulmer, have gone back to school because of the disapproval of society for their undereducated state. Zander's (5:35) study concluded that more than two-thirds of the public school adult education students interviewed came to class for some reason other than course content. His conclusions were that adult students participate in educational activities to make friends, to get away from the house for awhile, or to learn something about their latent talents as well as to acquire information.

The importance society places on education for each individual has increased the amount of time spent on formal education (1:5). In 1900, Bell states, that only about six percent (6%) of the seventeen year olds had graduated from high school but by 1964 the figure had increased to seventy-six percent (76%). Additional years of schooling were added to the educational process as a result of the broad demands of society. Some of the social factors which have influenced students to continue their education have been: (1) the

need for more specialized and extensive education; (2) the social emancipation of various groups; (3) the need to complete high school in preparation for additional schooling; (4) an increasingly technological society; (5) the influence of the GI Bill, loan programs and other economic assistance to students; (6) the accessibility of education; (7) the need for a feeling of personal satisfaction and accomplishment; and (8) a longer life span.

The survey of literature and the basic concepts from the module of Societal Factors formed the conceptual base for this study. The writer believed this study to be directly related to the basic concepts studied in Nova University's Societal Factors module and that the results of this study would prove to be valuable to the recruitment of adults in the high school completion program at Surry Community College.

PROCEDURES

This study was designed to determine some of the societal factors which have influenced adults to enroll in the high school completion program at Surry Community College. The study included a review of related literature. The review of literature was used to determine some of the factors which have been found by previous researchers or authors as effective influences on adults who decide to

return to school.

Three Surry Community College high school completion instructors were interviewed to determine the societal factors which these instructors believed to have influenced adults to enroll in the high school completion program. Three adults enrolled in the high school program were interviewed. Each of these three adults was asked what factors influenced him to enroll in the high school completion program at Surry Community College.

The information obtained from the survey of literature, the three high school completion instructors and the three adult high school completion students was used to make a check list of societal factors which have been found to influence adults to continue their education. The check list (Appendix A) included forty (40) items. Every effort was made to include as many specific items on the check list as possible without including obvious duplication. The check list was accompanied by a letter addressed to the adult student which asked for his help in identifying those societal factors which influenced him to enroll in the high school completion program. Each adult was given written and oral instruction on the procedure to use to mark his responses on the check list. The check list included a section with instruction for the student to add any comment or additional information which he wished to add.

The reliability of the instrument was tested by administering the check list to three adult high school completion students. After seven days the check list was administered to the same three students to determine if each student responded to the items on the check list as he did the previous week. No changes from the previous week were found on either of the adult's check list. The review of literature, the interviews with the three adult high school completion instructors and the three adult students were considered by the researcher as sufficient to render the check list valid.

Two hundred, ninety-five (295) adults were found to be enrolled in the three Surry Community College high school completion programs during winter term 1978-1979. A random selection of thirty (30) of these adult students was made to determine which students would be asked to complete the check list. The check list (Appendix A) was administered to the random sample and the responses were totaled. Each factor which was checked by ten (10) or more of the adult high school completion students was considered as a significant societal factor which influences adults to enroll in the high school completion program.

The following limitations to this study were:

1. A limited number of references on societal factors were found which centered on adult high school completion students.

2. Time did not permit a larger number (sample) to be used in the study.

The following assumptions were made:

1. The three adult high school students, chosen at random, and interviewed to determine some of the societal factors which influence adults to complete high school were representative of those enrolled.

2. The thirty adult students who completed the check list were representative of the population as a whole.

3. The adult students enrolled in the high school completion program were characteristic in terms of the societal factors which influenced them to enroll with other non-high school graduate adults in the population not presently enrolled in a high school completion program.

RESULTS

The check list of forty (40) societal factors was administered to thirty (30) adults enrolled in the high school completion program at Surry Community College. Each item on the check list received at least one check or response. Two items on the check list received twenty-nine (29) checks or responses. Twenty-four (24) of the forty societal factors included in the check list received ten (10) or more responses. Each of the twenty-four (24) items which was checked by ten (10) or more adults was considered to be a significant societal factor influencing adults to continue their education through the high school completion program at Surry Community College. Each of

the twenty-four (24) items which was checked by ten (10) or more adults is listed in Appendix B along with the exact number of responses each item received. The twenty-four items listed in Appendix B were found to relate to one or more of the following four broad categories:

1. The desire to complete high school for personal and social reasons.
2. The desire to improve job skills and opportunity for career advancement.
3. The flexibility of the schedule available to students and the convenience of the location of the lab(s) to students.
4. The fact that the high school completion program is offered free of charge.

Two adults wrote comments on the check list in the section provided for written responses. These comments expressed appreciation to the college for offering the high school completion program. No comments were included regarding societal factors which influence adults to continue their education.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The societal factors derived from the survey of literature, the interviews with the three high school completion instructors and the interviews with the three high school completion adult students proved to be factors which influenced adults to continue their education. This proved to be true since each of the forty (40) societal factors

included in the survey received at least one response. Twenty-four (24) of the societal factors were considered to be significant factors which influence adults to continue their education through the high school level. The twenty-four (24) factors which were considered significant received ten (10) or more responses or checks from the sample group. For the purpose of this study the research design limited the significant societal factors to those which received no fewer than ten (10) responses. The twenty-four societal factors which received ten or more responses are expected to be used by the college to help improve the service to the non-high school graduate adults in the various communities served by Surry Community College.

The implications of this study were:

1. Societal factors have significant influence on the adult student to continue his education.
2. Societal factors which influence an adult to continue his education can be identified.
3. Those societal factors which are significant to a number of adults could be used to recruit adults for the high school completion program.
4. The information from this study is expected to provide high school completion instructors and college counselors with a better understanding of the adult. A better understanding of the societal factors which have influenced adults to continue high school should help Surry Community College improve its educational program for adult students.

The following recommendations were made as a result of this study:

1. News releases, radio announcements and other media recruitment information should focus on the significant factors which might influence an adult to continue his education.

2. The results of this study should be made available to instructors and counselors who are in contact with non-high school graduate adults.

It was expected that the implementation of these recommendations would increase the number of adults who graduate through the high school completion program at Surry Community College. It was also expected that the knowledge of those societal factors would be valuable information for instructors and counselors who assist adults to enroll at Surry Community College. The implementation of these recommendations was expected to improve the service Surry Community College makes available to area adults.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

SURRY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DOBSON, NORTH CAROLINA 27017
TELEPHONE 386-8121

February 26, 1979

Dear High School Completion Adult Student:

You can help Surry Community College in its efforts to recruit adults into the high school completion program by responding to the checklist on the following pages. Please read each of the factors listed on the following pages, and check (✓) each factor which you feel influenced you to enroll in the Surry Community College adult high school completion program. Please add any information which you feel may be helpful or add any comments you wish to make concerning this checklist. There is a section for this purpose on the last page.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Claude V. Ayers

Claude V. Ayers
Dean of Continuing Education

Please check (✓) each factor listed below which influenced you to enroll in the high school completion program at Surry Community College.

___ My friends are enrolled in the program and they influenced me to join them.

___ I want to improve my job skills.

___ I want to advance my intellectual development.

___ I want more of a chance for job advancement.

___ My job requires skills that I need to improve.

___ I always wanted to finish high school and now I have an opportunity.

___ I want my friends and relatives to know that I <u>can</u> complete high school.

___ I want a better education.

___ My boss told me in order to be promoted I would have to get my high school diploma.

___ My husband encouraged me to enroll.

___ My wife encouraged me to enroll.

___ I want to improve the life style of my family.

___ I want to learn to be a better citizen.

___ I want to be better able to adapt to the rapidly changing world.

___ I want to be able to read and understand the newspaper.

___ I can receive GI Bill benefits while I am enrolled in the high school completion program.

___ I want to be able to manage my financial affairs better.

___ In this program I can arrange my own class schedule so that it does not conflict with my work schedule.

___ In this program I can arrange my schedule to harmonize with my family's schedule.

___ There is no cost to attend this high school completion program.

___ I want to learn to budget my salary.

___ This program is within easy driving distance from my home.

___ I want to be able to contribute intelligently to conversation.

___ I want to be able to read and understand the driver's license examination.

___ Completing high school is a personal challenge.

___ I want to improve my business skills.

___ I want to catch up with my family educationally.

___ I want to meet the standards required for military service.

___ I want to learn to read and understand the Bible better.

___ I want to learn to balance my checkbook.

___ I want to be a better consumer.

___ I want to be able to count money better.

___ I intend to further my education beyond the high school level.

___ I want to improve my life style.

___ I want to improve my social life.

___ My children want me to complete high school.

___ I want to be able to influence my children to get a good education.

___ I want to be a positive influence on the youth in my community.

___ I want to be able to interact in group situations more effectively.

___ I want to be able to say that I have completed high school.

Please write below any information which you feel may be helpful or add any comments you wish to make concerning this check list.

APPENDIX B

CHECK LIST RESULTS

Number of Responses	Societal Factor
29	I want to be able to say that I have completed high school.
29	I always wanted to finish high school and now I have an opportunity.
28	I want a better education.
26	In this program I can arrange my own class schedule so that it does not conflict with my work schedule.
26	I want more of a chance for job advancement.
24	I intend to further my education beyond the high school level.
23	I want to improve my job skills.
23	I want to advance my intellectual development.
23	Completing high school is a personal challenge.
21	I want to be better able to adapt to the rapidly changing world.
19	I want to improve my life style.
19	This program is within easy driving distance from my home.
18	I want to be able to influence my children to get a good education.
18	I want to improve my business skills.
18	In this program I can arrange my schedule to harmonize with my family's schedule.
17	I want my friends and relatives to know that I <u>can</u> complete high school.

CHECK LIST RESULTS (continued)

Number of Responses	Societal Factor
17	There is no cost to attend this high school completion program.
15	I want to improve the life style of my family.
14	I want to learn to be a better citizen.
13	I want to be able to manage my financial affairs better.
13	I want to be able to contribute intelligently to conversation.
12	I want to be a positive influence on the youth in my community.
11	My job requires skills that I need to improve.
10	I want to improve my social life.

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